

HAMILTON COUNTY COLD CASE UNIT
DISTRICT ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE
117 EAST 7TH STREET
SECOND FLOOR
CHATTANOOGA, TN 37402



August 18, 2016

Michigan Man Indicted in 2000 East Ridge Cold Case Homicide

Tuesday afternoon the Hamilton County Grand Jury indicted 43-year old Jason Kirk Sanford of Westland, Michigan, for First Degree Murder in the June 2000 death of Sarah Lea (Davis) Perry.

Background:

Sarah Lea (Davis) Perry, 21, was last seen on the morning of Wednesday, June 14, 2000. The following afternoon, Thursday, June 15, 2000, two 12-year old boys playing in Spring Creek off the 1600 block of Springvale Avenue in East Ridge came upon a garbage can. One of the boys dared the other to open the lid. Inside the can was the partially nude body of Sarah Perry. The young mother, who had two small boys of her own, had been strangled.

Just a few hours before she disappeared, Sarah Perry called East Ridge Police (at 4:11am on Wednesday, June 14, 2000) to request they check her home on Lockhart Lane for her estranged boyfriend, Jason Sanford. She said Sanford had threatened to hurt her and was trying to find her. An hour later, at 5:11am, a police officer stopped to talk to her as she walked along the 6400 block of Ringgold Road. She told the officer Jason Sanford was angry because she had ended their relationship. Several other witnesses reported seeing Sarah Perry in East Ridge. She was last seen alive at 8:30 that morning.

The following evening (June 15, 2000), a few hours after the discovery of Sarah Perry's body, Jason Sanford bought a one-way ticket and boarded a Greyhound bus to Detroit, Michigan. He has since been living in the Detroit metro area.

Recent Developments:

Sarah's mother, Pam Hilton, contacted the Cold Case Unit in May of this year. Detective Brian Ashburn, who is assigned to the CCU by Hamilton County Sheriff Jim Hammond, talked with her and then began a review of the case file. He quickly recognized the case could be solved.

This week Detective Ashburn and CCU investigator Michael Ray went to Detroit to conduct interviews in the case. Tuesday afternoon District Attorney General Neal Pinkston and CCU Supervisor Mike Mathis presented the case to the Grand Jury.

Sanford is currently being held in the Westland, Michigan jail pending extradition. A Hamilton County Sheriff's Office fugitive team is expected to travel to Detroit in the coming days to pick up the defendant and return him to Hamilton County.

Reminder: An indictment is not evidence of guilt. Charges are allegations and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Media Avail

11:00am Wednesday, August 17

Cold Case Unit – 117 East 7th Street

General Pinkston, Cold Case Supervisor Mike Mathis, East Ridge Police Chief JR Reed, Sheriff Jim Hammond, Chattanooga Police Chief Fred Fletcher and HCSO Capt. Bill Johnson will be available for interviews. Detectives Brian Ashburn and Michael Ray are returning from Michigan today and will not be available.

Sarah's mother (Pam Hilton) and other family members will be there and have said they are willing to take questions as well.

DA's Cold Case Unit

*District Attorney General Neal Pinkston created the Cold Case Unit upon taking office in September 2014 to review the nearly 200 unsolved homicides and missing persons cases in Hamilton County. The Unit is led by retired CPD Captain Mike Mathis. Chattanooga Police Chief Fred Fletcher and Hamilton County Sheriff Jim Hammond each provide an investigator to the unit. If you have information about any cold case, please contact us using the Cold Case Hotline at **423-209-7470** or by email at coldcases@hcdatn.org.*



*August 17, 2016 booking photo
provided by Westland Michigan Police Department*

JASON KIRK SANFORD
DOB: 07/11/1973